VISIT…

THE BURNING PLAGUE

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for four to six 1st-level characters

By Miguel Duran

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

INTRODUCTION

A sickness has come unto the simple mining community of Duvik's Pass, poisoning their wells and blighting their crops. With the pestilence leaving the strongest men of the town's guard a few short days away from death, the burden of descending into the mines and purging the wellspring of whatever evil has settled there falls to an intrepid band of adventurers. Can these noble heroes prevail within the depths of Duvik's Pass, or will they too fall victim to the perils of *The Burning Plague*?

The Burning Plague is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure designed for a party of four to six characters of 1st level. Dungeon Masters (DMs) should feel free to adjust the adventure as necessary to accommodate groups not falling within this range. However, given the fairly low power level of the inhabitants of the mines at Duvik's Pass, it should be noted that parties consisting of 20 or more total levels are unlikely to find satisfactory challenge within *The Burning Plague*.

PREPARATION

As the DM, you will need a copy of the *Player's Handbook* to run this adventure. Having a copy of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* and the *Monster Manual* will certainly enhance your ability to present the material herein, but they are not required to run this module.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form.

DUVIK'S PASS: A HISTORY

Duvik's Pass is a small town nestled within one of the few valleys that cross through the Serpentcoil Mountains. It has long been a waystop for travelers and adventurers seeking to rest aching limbs and drown painful memories within her gates. Moreover, it has also gained attention recently as a potential power in the area's commerce, due to a discovery of substantial silver deposits buried in the mountains nearby. Over the past three years, the men of Duvik's Pass have burrowed into the ground seeking the wealth therein. Able-bodied folk from neighboring villages flocked to the town, hoping to lend their strength within the mines and garner some share of the prize.

Hope and industry turned to despair and potential ruin with the advent of the Burning Plague four months ago. It began quietly enough, with the miners returning home from their work at nightfall complaining of blistering sores and an unbearable thirst. Shortly thereafter, the town's livestock was decimated by an unknown illness and her crops began to wither. The elders of Duvik's Pass declared that the well water had been soured by an unknown disease, but by then the Burning Plague had already begun claiming the young and the sickly. To make matters worse, the last few men still strong enough to plumb the wealth of the mine fell prey to a savage attack staged by a warband of kobolds just over half a month past. This fact is not known to the townspeople, who continue to await the return of their missing sons and husbands, while praying for an end to the sickness that continues to spread within their home.

While the kobolds have claimed the majority of the mine from their human foes, they too have fallen prey to the Burning Plague. Already they have begun to suffer losses to its ravages. The source of the disease is Jakk of the Tornclaw clan, an orc shaman who seeks vengeance upon the people of Duvik's Pass for an old wrong. It was ten years ago that Jakk saw his tribe slain by the humans of the valley. A young Jakk was one of the few of his clan to survive a concentrated effort by the militia of the Pass to eradicate the threats nesting in the mountains above.

As the years passed, Jakk devoted his life to watching the men of Duvik's Pass and their efforts and preparing his revenge. His prayers to Gruumsh One-Eye gave him resolve as he watched the "weak ones" steal the riches that should have been his clan's. After the god revealed to him the secret of the Burning Plague, Jakk used his newfound power to infect the springs feeding the town's wells as well as the other creatures dwelling within the mines. He has watched from the shadows as his plans have come to fruition.

Yet all has not gone as planned. Gruumsh, being a harsh deity who values strength above all things, has decided to test his disciple. Jakk has contracted the Burning Plague himself and has, despite his prayers, not been able to escape its grip. Although he grows near to death, the shaman will not rest until all of the peoples of the valley are laid low. He maintains his encampment by the springs below the earth, continuing to reinforce their corruption and awaiting an attempt to free the Pass from his hold. It is at this point that the adventurers enter the story.

OF THINGS TO COME

The basic storyline and ensuing action of the adventure is fairly straightforward. The player characters can explore the upper reaches of the mines and encounter the infected kobolds and rats awaiting them there. The kobolds are in a particularly paranoid frame of mind. Fearing retribution from the humans of the town below and knowing that some form of powerful creature has taken up residence deeper in the mine already set them ill at ease. The recent discovery that they are also dying of a mysterious disease has done nothing to improve their morale. Being particularly dim creatures to begin with, the kobolds have decided to hole up in the enormous font of wealth they have stumbled upon and hope for a miracle. They have prepared a number of traps to further barricade themselves in against any potential threats from within or without.

The adventurers will, with luck, navigate their way past the kobolds and their traps and work their way down to the spawning ground of the Burning Plague and the wellsprings that lie beyond. It is there that they will engage first the undead servitors Jakk has set to guard his project and then the weakened Jakk himself. With Jakk's death and the subsequent purification of the Plague's spawning grounds, the travails of the people of Duvik's Pass will come to an end. Of course, that assumes the adventurers do not first succumb to the Burning Plague themselves.

THE BURNING PLAGUE

The Burning Plague is a disease spread by contact. Although generally transmitted by rats and vermin, Jakk has, by virtue of his divine magic, managed to sour the springs feeding the wells of Duvik's Pass with it as well. The Plague has a very short lifespan, generally requiring an individual to be repeatedly exposed to it before causing serious harm. Its symptoms include fever, searing muscular pains, clenching of the throat and possible choking, fatigue and potentially death.

For the purposes of this adventure, any time a PC comes into contact with a monster or item that has been noted as *contagious*, he or she must make an

immediate Fortitude saving throw (DC 13). Success indicates that the character has managed to avoid infection, although repeated or continued contact over subsequent rounds should result in further saving throws. Failing the saving throw results in infection.

In the case of infection, nothing transpires for the first 24 hours after a failed saving throw. This is the Burning Plague's incubation period. After 24 hours have passed, the infected (and now *contagious*) adventurer suffers the temporary ability loss of 1d4 Con. Once per day afterward, he or she must make a successful Fortitude saving throw to avoid further Con loss (at the same rate of 1d4 points of temporary loss a day). Two successful saving throws in a row indicate that the character has overcome the disease, although it can be contracted once again by contact with a *contagious* object or individual. A character reduced to 0 Constitution dies. There are no means available to escape the Plague, aside from successfully waiting out the disease or receiving the benefits of a *remove disease* spell.

For further details on disease, refer to the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

GETTING STARTED

The most obvious form of drawing the party into the adventure is the appeal of aiding the people of Duvik's Pass in their plight. Given the geographical and now industrial significance of the valley that Duvik's Pass lies within, any adventurers crossing the mountains would most likely come across the town and learn of its dilemma. However, if the mere thought of aiding the unfortunate townsfolk does not appeal to your group of characters, other possible hooks include the following:

- The PCs are hired by a wealthy merchant of a nearby city to seek out his wayward son. The lad left for the mines of Duvik's Pass with hopes of financing his own digging venture there and has not been heard from in the past month.
- The adventurers encounter refugees from the mines on the road. They tell the tale of a cave filled with glittering riches and carrying a powerful curse. While they are mere peasants with no understanding of such things, the refugees are certain that the adventurers might be able to discover the source of the cave's evil and put an end to it.
- One of the PCs has a relative or friend in Duvik's Pass who is infected with the Plague and dying. Only by venturing into the mines and cleansing them can the character hope to save him.

Duvik's Pass (small town): conventional—AL NG; 1200 gp limit; 50,000 gp assets; Population 1540; Mixed (92% human, 5% halfling, 2% dwarf, 1% other races)

Authority Figures: Mayor Cristofar Sendars, male human Nob5

Important Characters: Arianna Tungstan (chief miner's wife), female human Com2; Stefan Doverspeak (influential merchant and mine financier) male human Exp6; Father Samual (town priest and healer), male half-elf Clr3

Others: Town guards, War2 (15); Exp4 (19); Exp2 (51); Rog1 (2); Clr1 (1); Com1 (1449)

MINES OF DUVIK'S PASS

Area 1: At the Entrance

The adventure opens with the player characters standing outside the lone entrance to the cavernous mines. Begin by reading aloud or paraphrasing the following for the players:

> A cool breeze drifts down from the towering peaks of the Serpentcoil Mountains as you behold the entrance to the caverns. The frost-rimed ground is littered with tools, picks and shovels, some of which protrude from soft banks of snow. A single darkened shaft leads into the depths of the mine ahead. The dirt path beneath its wooden support structure is covered with stone debris, a few pieces of which occasionally glint with the slightest hint of ore. No light issues forth from the tunnel. Burnt-out torches are strewn across the floor, their brackets torn from the shaft walls. Behind you, the worn road leads back through the crags to the valley below. Aside from the quiet whistling of the wind, complete silence fills the small clearing within the mountains.

The tunnel is 15 feet wide and 10 feet tall. A successful Spot check (DC 15) reveals that the wooden supports to the tunnel are chipped and torn, as if having been damaged in recent battle. Further examination with a light source reveals that they are also stained with blood. Aside from the picks and shovels, there is

nothing of value at this location. The mineshaft heads north into the mountain and slants downward at a gradual incline. It extends 120 feet into the darkness before opening into Area 2. As there is no light source in the tunnel, adventurers without darkvision who wish to proceed must have some source of illumination .

The kobolds within the mines slaughtered the last of the townsfolk who tried to escape here. They looted the bodies and hid them away in Area 5a. The corpses were then stolen by Jakk for further use in his spawning grounds in Area 6.

Area 2: The Greeting Room (EL 1)

The tunnel opens into a small, roughly rectangular chamber. Scattered chunks of silver ore surround an overturned pair of wooden carts. The lower half of what appears to be a human body juts out from beneath one of the cart's edges. It shows no signs of movement. Dried blood is smeared across the northern wall in several places. Exits lead to the west and the east.

The chamber is 25 feet wide and 25 feet long. When the mine was operational, this area served as a commons area for sorting, weighing, cataloging, and shipping out ore. When the kobolds invaded, it was used as a final rallying point for the miners. The few who did flee the resulting melee were cut down by the mine's entrance. The remainder of the defenders died here. The lanterns that once hung from the walls here as illumination sources have been smashed against the ground and no longer function. Unless the PCs have their own light source, this room is dark.

The west exit is a tunnel 30 feet long that leads to Area 3. The east exit is a gradually sloping ramp that leads downward about 60 feet before opening into the central mine in Area 5.

The body left beneath the mine cart serves as a **Trap** for any meddlesome adventurers who disturb it or the cart that it lies beneath. The ore found around the body serves as **Treasure**. The body has remained unmolested in this area for over a week and is no longer *contagious*.

The corpse is the miner's chief engineer, Jacen Tungstan; party members who have researched the mines of Duvik's Pass may recognize him. He is obviously the victim of foul play, having suffered several puncture wounds to the chest and neck area. A successful Heal check (DC 15) reveals that Tungstan had symptoms resembling those of the Plague and that he has been dead for about two weeks. The check also reveals that there are a number of crude broken crossbow bolts within the puncture wounds that Jacen apparently died from.

Trap: The cart the body is pinned beneath is rigged with a line attached to a thunderstone concealed in the ceiling above. Anyone disturbing the cart, either by turning it over or by seeking to drag the body out from beneath it, will snap the line and send the thunderstone crashing to the ground. Anyone within 10 feet of the cart will be affected by the resulting blast. Characters deafened by the thunderstone will recover their hearing after an hour.

Thunderstone Trap: CR 1: Sonic attack deafens all within 10' radius; Fortitude save (DC 15) avoids; See p. 114 of PH for effects of deafness; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: The chunks of silver ore can be salvaged and are worth 200 gp. A character with the Appraise or Profession: Mining skill can appraise their value (DC 15). Furthermore, if the PCs discover and disarm the thunderstone trap above, they may take the stone as treasure as well.

Development: If the PCs trigger the thunderstone trap, the kobolds in Areas 3 and 5 will be alerted to their presence. They will make the appropriate preparations described in these areas.

Area 3: The Mess Hall (EL 1 1/2

A closed wooden door serves as the entryway into the mess hall. Once the dining quarter of the mine, this area has now been made into a watch post for the kobold warband. Once the PCs open the door (it is not locked) and enter into the room, read the following description aloud:

This large, square room houses four long wooden tables, each with a bench on either side. On top of the tables lie a number of wooden bowls and eating utensils. In the southeast corner of the room, a small stewpot steams over a fireplace carved into the floor. A pungent odor hangs in the air.

The stew inside the pot and in the wooden bowls is a particularly foul concoction, made of some of the rotting foodstuffs from the storeroom in Area 4 and mixed with bits of meat from the rats the kobolds have caught

in the mines. If the foul smell of the stew combined with the inability to identify its contents does not discourage the player characters from giving it a taste, it is necessary to mention that the stew, given its diseased contents, is *contagious*.

The only two exits from this room are the door to the east leading to Area 2 and a passageway leading north for 20 feet to Area 4. As was the case in Area 2, the lanterns in this room are smashed and the only source of light here is the soft glow emanating from the smoldering embers in the fireplace.

If the PCs have not already warned them of their presence, either by setting off the trap in Area 2 or by being particularly noisy on their way to Area 3 (i.e. coming down the corridor wearing full plate, conversing loudly, casting a spell outside the door, etc.), they will encounter a large number of **Creatures** here.

Creatures: Nine kobolds have stationed themselves in this room. If the PCs were noisy in the passageway between Areas 2 and 3, make a single Listen check (DC 11) for the kobolds to determine if they have been alerted. If successful, five of the kobolds will Move Silently, withdrawing to Area 4 to prepare an ambush while the others stay behind to delay the progress of the adventurers. The same thing will have occurred if the PCs activated the thunderstone trap in Area 2, only there is no need for a Listen check nor will the kobolds need to Move Silently to reach Area 3 without drawing attention to themselves.

Alternately, if the PCs have managed to reach the door to Area 3 without alerting the kobolds to their presence, they may make a Listen check (DC 11) themselves. Success indicates that they can hear the doglike yapping of the kobolds on the other side of the door as they eat and talk with one another. Having either Knowledge of the Draconic language or extensive experience in fighting kobolds allows the adventurers to identify the voices they hear. If the party has the ability to comprehend the kobolds' speech and takes the time to listen to what they are saying, they may gain the following interesting tidbits:

- The kobolds are very nervous and would like to leave the mines as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, their commander has determined that they must stay for the time being.
- Some manner of creature has been stealing the dead from their camp while they sleep. Most of the humans have already been stolen and even a few kobold corpses have gone missing.
- There must be a curse to this mine. Half of their band has already died from strange fevers or horrible coughs.

Kobolds (9): CR 1/6; Small Humanoid; HD 1/2 d8 -1; hp 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15; Atk -1 melee (1d6-2, halfspear) or +2 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SQ: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, contagious; AL LE; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Search +2, Spot +2, Alertness

Special Qualities: Light Sensitivity: Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a daylight spell. Contagious: Individuals who come into contact with a contagious object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Tactics: If the kobolds hear the player characters in the tunnel connecting Areas 2 and 3, they will flip over the table farthest from the entryway and use it as a barricade, gaining one-half cover (AC bonus of +4, Reflex save bonus of +2) in the process. They will ready their crossbows and fire at whatever enters the room from Area 2 first. They will engage in close combat only when the heroes force it upon them.

Conversely, if the kobolds are not prepared for the player characters' entrance, they will be forced into melee combat due to the lack of time to load and ready their crossbows. In this scenario, the kobolds charge their opponents, hoping to get the better of them with sheer numbers. They attempt to flank the PCs wherever possible.

It is highly unlikely that the kobolds in this room, given their desperate state and the orders of their leader, will be open to any form of negotiation or parley.

Treasure: Each kobold has 11 gp in his or her belt pouch. In addition, the third kobold carries a beautiful oval-shaped amethyst and a small iron key in his pouch as well. The amethyst was a reward from the warband's leader to the head of this area's watch force for being

particularly bloodthirsty in the slaughter of the miners. It has a value of 150 gp. The small iron key unlocks the door to Area 4.

Area 4: The Larder (EL3, potentially EL4)

A closed wooden door bars entry into area 4. If the kobolds from Area 3 have retreated here to set their ambush, the door is locked. With a successful Open Locks check (DC 25), player characters can open it without the key. Otherwise, refer to the door's statistics below to determine the difficulty of breaking it down.

Wooden Door: 1 in. thick; Hard 5; hp 10; AC 5; Break DC 13.

Note that the door is unlocked if the kobolds from Area 3 do not retreat to this area. Once the PCs gain entry to the room, read the following out loud:

> This long, narrow room is lined with shelves loaded with foodstuffs and supplies. Heavy burlap sacks are piled atop one another in the corners of the chamber. A few have been torn open, leaving spills of oats and flour along the floor. Several barrels stand in a cluster near the far northern wall.

As in previous rooms, there is no light source present here. The room is 60 feet long by 15 feet wide, with the shelves effectively hedging it down to a width of 10 feet. There are a number of **Creatures** hiding in the room as well as a single **Trap** that can be set off only from behind the six barrels by the northern wall. The shelves have some valuable goods on them but the real find is the **Treasure** concealed in Barrel 5. There are no other exits to this room besides the south door.

If the kobolds from Area 3 have retreated to this room, they are hiding behind the barrels with their crossbows ready, gaining +4 AC, +2 Reflex saves so long as they maintain their cover. When the party sets foot through the door, one will spring the **Trap** while the others unleash a volley of bolts across the room. Note that the width of the room makes advancement difficult for the party, as there is only enough space for two individuals to progress side by side at a time. PCs can take cover behind the shelves or sack piles and should be reminded of that option, should the situation take a turn for the worse.

Trap: Several sacks of flour are tightly hung from the ceiling by a network of ropes. The interiors of the sacks are lined with a sharp wire, which is in turn connected to a single ripcord hanging by the group of barrels at the north wall. Anyone who takes the time to make a Search check in the room almost certainly will discover (DC 15) the fairly obtrusive trap. Once it is noticed, no roll is necessary to disable the trap, assuming the PCs have access to the ripcord (i.e. it is not in the hand of a kobold across the room).

Once the trap is triggered, the ripcord tears the sacks of flour open, showering their contents onto the room below. The flour spills across the southernmost 40 feet of the room, temporarily obscuring the sight of anyone standing within that area. For the first two rounds after the trap is sprung, anyone standing in its radius has a 20% miss chance with any form of attack, as if their enemies were one-half concealed. In the third and fourth round, the miss chance falls to 10%, as the flour cloud begins to settle. By the fifth round, the cloud is no more and attacks proceed as normal.

Flour cloud: CR 1; 40' x 10' range; confers 20% miss chance to all in range for 2 rounds followed by 10% miss chance for 2 more rounds; stepping out of range negates effect; Search (DC 15); Disable Device (N/A)

Creatures: Two sets of creatures wait in this room. Barrels 2 and 5 are each filled with rats (four apiece.) They will not venture out of the barrels unless they are somehow disturbed, be it by someone smashing the barrels, rifling through their contents, tipping them over, etc. Any of these instances will provoke an attack from the maddened rats, which are suffering from the effects of the Plague (and therefore *contagious)* and are fairly hungry to boot.

More immediately dangerous is the dire weasel hiding in the pile of sacks in the southwestern corner of the room. It will wait until the party has spent two rounds in the room, sizing them up and preparing to spring. On the third round, it will leap for the nearest character. PCs can Spot the dire weasel by succeeding in an opposed check versus its Hide roll. The dire weasel has traveled here with the kobolds and will not attack its masters. It too is *contagious*.

Dire weasel: CR 2; Medium-Size Animal (5 ft. long); HD 3d8+0; hp 12; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16; Atk +7 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA: Attach, blood drain; SQ: Scent, *contagious*; AL N; SV: Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 6, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Hide +9, Move Silently +10, Spot +5, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Special Attacks: Attach: A dire weasel that hits latches onto its opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire weasel loses its Dex bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. Blood Drain: A dire weasel drains blood for 2d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

Special Qualities: Scent: Detects nearby enemies through smell. (See DMG for details.) *Contagious*: Individuals who come into contact with a *contagious* object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Rats (8): CR 1; Tiny Animal; HD 1/4 d8 - 1; hp 1 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 14 ; Atk +4 melee (1d3 - 4, bite); SQ: Scent, *contagious*; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Special Qualities: Scent: Detects nearby enemies through smell. (See DMG for details.) *Contagious*: Individuals who come into contact with a *contagious* object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Treasure: The shelves contain very little of value. They are laden with poor quality food, most of it *contagious* due to the presence of the rats and kobolds, and some basic food preparation and storage utensils. The six barrels, however, hold a few goods worthy of further examination. In the instance that one of the barrels is targeted for an attack, all six are alike in the following stats.

Wooden Barrel: 1 in. thick; Hard 5; hp 2; AC 5; Break DC 16.

Barrel 1: A cask of high quality wine. Although currently *contagious*, the wine may eventually become good again, should the adventurers defeat Jakk and end the Plague. The wine was an extravagant gift from a merchant to the miners of Duvik's Pass, with the hope of currying favor as the town's silver industry picked up. It remains almost full, as neither the miners nor the kobolds found it to their taste. The cask will fetch 200 gp if sold upon the quest's completion.

Barrel 2: Filled with strips of *contagious* dried beef jerky (and rats), this barrel holds nothing of value.

Barrel 3: This barrel stores the lamp oil formerly used in the mines' lanterns. It is, of course, highly flammable. If its contents are exposed to fire, the resulting explosion act as alchemist's fire, with the sole exception of having a 20-foot (in place of a - foot) splash diameter.

Barrel 4: A half-consumed quantity of strong (and *contagious*) ale. Apparently this sort of drink was more to the miners' liking than the wine in Barrel 1.

Barrel 5: Filled with the remainders of a few *contagious* wheels of cheese and the rats who have been busily consuming them. A successful Search check (DC 15) reveals that the bottom of the barrel is in fact false, concealing a hidden compartment. Within the compartment hides a small cloth bag containing a moonstone (50 gp), a gold brooch with a jade inlay (250 gp), and three pieces of moss agate (worth 10 gp apiece). Additionally, the bag holds 24 gp and a vial with a potion of *invisibility*. The stash of one of the miners who enjoyed a secondary, less reputable occupation, this treasure has been left behind following his demise.

Barrel 6: Holds salt for use as a spice and preservative.

Area 5: Chutes and Ladders (EL4)

When the party is 40 feet down the slope leading from Area 2, the incline suddenly becomes much steeper. A soft blue luminescence glows in the distance farther down the ramp where, 20 feet later, the tunnel opens into a larger cavern. The tunnel also narrows here to a width of 10 feet. Any dwarves with the party automatically receive a Search check (DC 20) at the point where the tunnel's slant changes to determine whether they notice the **Trap** in the stonework 10 feet ahead.

Once the party arrives in the cavern, read or paraphrase the following to the players:

> This enormous cavern extends upward for at least 100 feet, climbing high into the bowels of the mountain. Glowing blue-green lichens creep across the rough walls and man-sized stalagmites protruding from the ground in this area, their faint light growing and then diminishing again every few seconds. The illumination occasionally highlights small flecks of silver, which glitter in the face of the great western wall of the cave. Several cables hang down from the edge of a wide hollow within that wall. The hollow penetrates deep into the west face of the cavern and begins about 20 feet above where you stand. The air here feels cool and damp.

This was once the central mining area for the workers of Duvik's Pass. The cables hanging from the ledge of the hollow were used to lift miners up to the richest deposits of silver in the cavern. They are tied to pitons firmly dug into the ground of the cavern and are therefore secure, although the players will have no way to judge that without climbing up to the hollow themselves. A Climb check to scale the wall with the use of one of these ropes is fairly simple (DC 5). A Climb check to scale the wall without the use of these ropes is far more difficult (DC 20). To make matters worse, the ledge also happens to be inhabited by a number of hostile **Creatures**.

The grotto is roughly 80 feet by 100 feet, with the hollow running 20 feet long and another 30 feet deep into the western wall. There are two exits to the room besides the tunnel leading back to Area 4. On the ledge, a secret door in the north face within the hollow leads to Area 5a. PCs can discover it with a successful Search check (DC 20). Also, in the far northeastern end of the cavern, a tunnel leads east and farther down into the mountain to Area 6.

Trap: A simple pit trap awaits the characters who continue on recklessly after the entrance tunnel's incline becomes drastically steeper. It is set exactly 10 feet away from the egress into the cavern that makes up Area 5. The pit is 10 feet by 10 feet in area, roughly 20 feet deep, and is sprung by a pressure plate on its far side (the side closest to the glowing grotto). Thus, the first party member who crosses the pit area will trigger the trap. Anyone behind him or her within the trap's area of effect will risk falling into the pit. The pit is empty; adventurers can make a Crafts (Trapmaking) or Profession (Mining) check (DC 15) to determine that it is freshly dug.

Pit Trap (20' deep): CR 1; no attack roll necessary (2d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Creatures: M'dok, the kobold warband's leader, has instructed his men to set up camp on the ledge. Waiting in the shadows of the hollow, they are prepared to attack anything that enters the grotto. If the thunderstone trap in Area 2 or the pit trap in this area has been sprung, the kobolds are alert and hiding as the adventurers enter the cavern. Otherwise, the DM should use his or her best judgment as to whether the party has taken the necessary steps to avoid being heard during the descent. In the case of any doubt, opposed Listen/Move Silently rolls between the kobolds and the party can decide the issue.

M'dok, male kobold Sor2: CR 2; Small Humanoid; HD 2d4; hp 11; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15; Atk +0 melee (1d6-2, halfspear) or +3 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SQ: Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, *contagious**; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Hide +8, Move Silently +4, Spellcraft +5, Concentration +5, Alertness, Combat Casting (Sor1)

Special Qualities: Light Sensitivity: Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell. *Contagious:* Individuals who come into contact with a *contagious* object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Possessions: Halfspear, light crossbow, 20 bolts, leather armor, *Enlarge* potion (5th level), belt pouch with 24 gp and violet garnet (500 gp). Note: M'dok has no familiar.

Spells Known (6/5): 0 - *Open/Close, Ghost Sound, Dancing Lights, Daze, Ray of Frost*; 1st—*Burning Hands, Summon Monster I*

Kobolds (8): hp 1, 1, 3, 3, 2, 1, 2, 1; 11 gp each.

Tactics: The desperate M'dok orders his troops launch volley after volley of crossbow bolts at the party. He also risks sending a kobold to the ledge's edge to cut the ropes leading down to the cavern floor if the party seems interested in climbing up to engage in melee. If the party seems overwhelmed by the kobold missile fire, point out that the man-sized stalagmites on the ground offer excellent (up to total) cover from the hail of crossbow bolts. It is recommended that the DM refer to the Climb rules on pg. 64 of the PH to gauge the difficulty levels of climbing the 20 feet to the ledge while under the pressures of kobold missile fire.

Development: Note that M'dok is open to negotiation, particularly if he feels his warband is seriously overmatched by the PCs. If the tide turns against the kobolds, or if the battle turns into a standoff (with the PCs refusing to emerge from cover perhaps), M'dok attempts to parley with the adventurers, hoping to offer them the wealth of the "demon" (Jakk, of course) farther down within the mountain in exchange for leaving the warband unmolested. He denies that his band had anything to do with the deaths of the miners (a bla-

tant lie, of course) but consents to leaving the mines if doing so will spare him and his fellows. M'dok is *very* reluctant to fight to the death, especially given the presence of his young child in Area 5a.

Area 5a: Kobold Camp (EL 0)

This concealed alcove serves as the main encampment for the kobold warband. Used primarily as a storage area and sleeping quarters, this small cave houses the remnants of a cooking fire, a few scavenged blankets, several sacks full of **Treasure**, and the two young kobolds who accompanied the warband on their exploration mission as a rite of passage, one of whom is M'dok's son. They are the only **Creatures** here. This area also stored the bodies of the miners until the evening that Jakk stole them away under cover of a potion of *invisibility* for use in Area 6.

Creatures: If the characters somehow gain access to this room, they find the two immature kobolds huddling fearfully beneath a cloak they are using for a blanket. There are no stats provided for the two helpless kobolds, as they are effectively at the mercy of the heroes. It should also be noted, for those coming into contact with them, that the children are *contagious*.

Treasure: The sacks are filled with several weeks' worth of the mine's harvested ore and can be sold for 500 gp. In addition, the cloak that the children huddle under is, in fact, a *+1 cloak of resistance*. Again, good-aligned PCs should think carefully about how they deal with the kobold children, even with the realization that they hold a treasure.

Area 6: Charnel Pit (EL 3)

The tunnel from Area 5 winds about 70 feet down into the mountain before opening into Area 6. As the PCs approach, they begin to feel an uncomfortable heat emanating from the room ahead. Although initially mild when the party first begins feeling its effects, it reaches sweltering intensity by the time the characters reach the entryway of Area 6. When the heroes enter the room, read (or paraphrase) the following to them

> Waves of heat wash through the cave, thickening the air and making breathing difficult. This small, bowl-shaped cavern's floor is littered with humanoid corpses. Rats skitter through the sea of bodies within the sunken floor, pausing occasionally to nibble at a choice morsel. A host of their brethren lie nearby on their backs, some of them still twitching with a few remnants of life. A tunnel's opening is visible in the eastern wall of this chamber and, in the distance, the sound of rushing water can be heard.

This chamber serves as the breeding pit for the Burning Plague. Jakk has stored the bodies of the kobolds and miners who have died within these caves in this room with the intent of using them as incubators for the disease. The rats that feast on these bodies continue the spread of the Plague throughout the mines. Although it is not initially apparent to the PCs, Jakk has also left a few **Creatures** among the corpses to deal with any adventurers who might explore the area. Beyond that threat, the cave itself serves as a trap for those foolish enough to cross through it.

The presence of the Plague here is so strong that merely remaining within the confines of this chamber provides the adventurers with the threat of contracting it. Every three rounds that a character remains within this area, he or she must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague. If a character remaining for three rounds within the area is already in the incubation period of the Plague, he or she must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or immediately begin suffering the ability loss effects of the Plague. The area has no effect on those already fully infected by the Plague.

The chamber is round, with a 40 foot diameter. The tunnel to the east leads 60 feet farther down into the mountain and into Area 7.

Creatures: As the PCs cross the length of the room, the zombie guardians Jakk left behind to intercept would-be heroes lift themselves from their places among the corpses and attack. They fight until successfully turned or destroyed.

Zombie Miners (4): CR 1/2; Medium-size Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 2d12+3; hp 11, 12, 20, 14; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SQ may take only partial actions in any given round, undead immunities; contagious; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Toughness

Special Qualities: Undead Immunities: Immune to mind influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralyzation, stunning, disease, and necromantic effects; not subject to critical hits, sneak attacks, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain; immune to anything requiring a

Fort save (see *Monster Manual* for more info.) *Contagious*: Individuals who come into contact with a *contagious* object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Zombie Kobolds (4): CR 1/4; Small-size Undead (3 ft. tall); HD 1d12+3; hp 10, 5, 7, 11; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +1 melee (1d4, slam); SQ may take only partial actions in any given round, undead immunities; contagious; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 8, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Toughness

Special Qualities: Undead Immunities: Immune to mind influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralyzation, stunning, disease, and necromantic effects; not subject to critical hits, sneak attacks, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain; immune to anything requiring a Fort save (see *Monster Manual* for more info.) *Contagious*: Individuals who come into contact with a *contagious* object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Area 7: The Wellspring (EL 5)

A single, jagged pillar of rock lined with glowing blue-green moss emerges from the depths of the pool within the center of this cavern. Water courses down its side from a font near its tip, cascading into the pool below. The pool feeds a wide stream that flows rapidly along the length of the room and then under the rock wall at the southern end of the cave. Several glyphs are carved deep into the stone face of the pillar, their outlines just visible beneath the light of the moss. An eerie sense of discomfort pervades this place.

The cavern is about 70 feet wide by 120 feet long. The pillar in the center is fairly massive, having a 10-foot radius and stretching 20 feet up into the air. The pillar can be climbed by way of a narrow trail, about 2 feet wide, that loops around it, with the exception being the area smoothed over by the waterfall from the springs. Jakk has made his encampment near the pillar's top and hides on the opposite face of the pillar when the PCs enter the chamber. He is the sole **Creature** within this area.

The glyphs carved here are written in Orc script and serve as an entreaty to Gruumsh to smite down Jakk's enemies with terrible pestilence. It also retells the history of the mines and the fate of the Tornclaw clan. Anyone who makes a successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 15) will recognize the symbols that make this a place of worship for Gruumsh. The water of the pool and streaming from the pillar, when examined, will appear to be particularly murky and foul. A *detect magic* spell reveals that, indeed, traces of some faint magic affect the water.

Creatures: Although Jakk appears frustrated that the adventurers have found his lair, he views their arrival as a challenge set for him by Gruumsh and methodically proceeds to do his best to eliminate them. He quaffs his potion of *bane* shortly before they arrive in the cavern (if he hears the party's skirmish with the undead in Area 6).

When prepared for combat, Jakk shouts a curse of hatred at the adventures and begins casting his ranged spells from the cover of the pillar. He then uses his *darkness* spell to obscure the battlefield and close for melee, letting his Blind-Fight feat guide him in combat. He also uses his *contagion* spells liberally, hoping to slay any adventurers already weakened by the Plague. Jakk truly believes this conflict is a test of resolve sent by his deity, so he will not parley or surrender, fighting to the death under most circumstances.

Jakk Tornclaw, male orc Clr5: CR 5 (reduced from 6 for Plague Con loss, spell loss); Medium-Size Humanoid (Orc); HD 5d8 - 10; hp 22; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (scale mail); AC 18; Atk: +6 melee (1d8+3, *+1* heavy mace) or +4 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity, *contagious*; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 6, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Brew Potion, Spellcraft +4, Concentration +2, Heal +7, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +8, Spot + 7

Special Qualities: Light Sensitivity: Orcs suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell. *Contagious:* Individuals who come into contact with a *contagious* object or creature must succeed in a Fortitude save (DC 13) or become infected with the Burning Plague.

Possessions: +1 heavy mace, large steel shield, chain mail, light crossbow, 20 bolts, stone holy symbol of Gruumsh, potion of *cure light wounds* (5th level), potion of *invisibility* (3rd level), potion of *bane* (5th

level), scroll of *summon monster II, lesser restoration, dispel magic* (all 5th level), 13 gp, blue sapphire worth 1300 gp.

Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3): 0—*Read Magic, Resistance, Guidance*; 1st—*Cause Fear, Doom, Protection from Good*; 2nd—*Darkness, Hold Person;* 3rd—*Contagion x2*

IN CONCLUSION

Defeating Jakk has an almost immediate visible effect upon the waters of the wellspring, which begin to clear themselves of the muck of the Plague shortly after his death. The mine itself remains in need of purification and most of the *contagious* elements therein will have to be burned before it is safe to wander through the mountain's interior once more. The Plague symptoms affecting the town of Duvik's Pass will begin to subside with the cleansing of its water supply. Its grateful citizenry offer a reward of 100 gp taken from the mine's anticipated profits to each adventurer who helped reclaim the area. The PCs also will find themselves welcomed as heroes in Duvik's Pass for the rest of their lives and will never need to pay for lodging or any supplies within reason during their returns to that place.

As for further adventures, word spreads among the orc clans that the PCs slew the last son of the Tornclaw clan. Gruumsh One-Eye, not be pleased by their interference, sends word to his followers that warriors who bring him the heads of the meddlers who thwarted his Burning Plague will gain his favor. If M'dok remains alive at the adventure's end, he may return in the future as well, leading another warband to reclaim the mine he considers his. For now, however, the day has been won and the dangers of the Plague averted. The PCs (and their players) should take some time to enjoy the satisfaction of a quest completed.